

**UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT  
SOUTHERN DISTRICT OF OHIO  
EASTERN DIVISION**

**Stephanie Clifford,**

**Plaintiff,**

**v.**

**Civil Action 2:19-cv-119**

**Judge Michael H. Watson**

**Shana M. Keckley, *et al.*,**

**Magistrate Judge Deavers**

**Defendants.**

**ORDER**

On September 27, 2019, Stephanie Clifford ("Plaintiff") and the City of Columbus entered into a settlement agreement which fully resolves the underlying dispute in this case. Thereafter, Plaintiff's former attorney, Michael Avenatti ("Avenatti"), filed a notice of interested party and sought to collect from the settlement award for unpaid attorney's fees. ECF No. 40. Plaintiff and Avenatti are now arbitrating the contested fees, but Avenatti seeks to place the settlement award in escrow until the arbitration is resolved. ECF No. 45. Donald J. Trump also filed a notice of interested party, arguing that a judgment awarded against Plaintiff in a separate lawsuit entitles him to a portion of the settlement funds in this case. ECF No. 43.

The Court held a status conference in this case on Thursday, November 14, 2019, to address the interested parties' filings. At the conference, Plaintiff's current attorneys indicated that they seek to immediately collect their attorney's

fees from the settlement agreement, regardless of the purported interest in the remainder of the award by the other interested parties. The Court wishes to address that issue first.

Accordingly, the Court orders the following briefing:

- Plaintiff's current attorneys are ordered to brief **within twenty-one days** of the date of this Order the issue of whether they should be able to collect their attorney's fees before the Court adjudicates the interests of any other parties.
- Interested Parties Michael Avenatti and Donald J. Trump may file responses within twenty-one days thereafter, *limited solely* to whether Plaintiff's current attorneys may collect their fee before the Court adjudicates their interests.
- Plaintiff's attorneys may file a reply to each interested party within fourteen days.
- In the interim, if the underlying settlement in this case is approved by Columbus City Council, the City is **ORDERED** to deposit the funds with the Clerk of Courts of the Southern District of Ohio, who shall place it in an interest-bearing account where it will remain until instructed otherwise.

The Court will order further briefing on the remaining issues in due course once this initial matter is resolved.

**IT IS SO ORDERED.**

/s/ Michael H. Watson  
**MICHAEL H. WATSON, JUDGE**  
**UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT**